



SOME LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF CAMEROON FRANCOPHONE ENGLISH

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Abstract:

In Cameroon, the complexity of the linguistic landscape has led to the speaking of two non-native varieties of English to express the country's realities. Cameroon English is spoken by Anglophone Cameroonians of the North/South West Regions of the country. Cameroon Francophone English is spoken by Francophones in the remaining eight regions of Cameroon. The phonological features of the two varieties of English have been extensively studied and are quite stable, but their lexical, syntactical and grammatical characteristics, among others, still need a lot of investigation. They are full of innovations, neologisms, and coinage (Simo Bobda 1994; Safotso 2020) that some students' dissertations continue to consider as errors, though many of them are very regular. This study analyses data gathered from university students' essays (N=600), classroom presentations and discussions, debates on various national radio stations and TV channels (Safotso 2022) to highlight some lexico-grammatical features of Cameroon Francophone English. Results show that, like its phonological aspects, Cameroon Francophone English has lexico-grammatical hallmarks despite the ample teaching of Standard English to its speakers.

Keywords: CamFE, lexical, grammatical, coin, French, feature, user, speaker, New Englishes

1. Introduction

Some fifty years ago, any deviation from Standard British / American English or RP was seen as a serious language threat. But the rapid expansion of New Englishes in the Outer and Expanding Circles has led to the reconsideration of a number of issues. Gradually, intelligibility and communication have become the norm, although at times the rate of mutual intelligibility among some non-native varieties is so low (Safotso 2015a). The dynamism of Non-native Englishes is quite remarkable. Many Africans and Asians are comfortable in their local varieties as they use them to satisfy their local

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communication needs. Among others, they coin new vocabulary items to suit their contexts, switch to local language items, extend or restrict the meaning of certain words, and transpose the reading/grammar rules of their home or foreign languages into English.

Generally, we take more care in writing than speaking. In speaking, there are many hesitations, pauses, broken sentences, improvisations and lapses. In writing, the writer takes time to think, to go to grammar books and dictionaries, to revise the draft, and even to have the work proofread (by a third person). Although many French-speaking Cameroonians take those precautions, at the university level, they continue to make wrong choices of lexical items and faulty grammatical constructions in English. They generally confuse vocabulary items and construct their ideas in French or their home languages before translating them into English. Despite ample explanations, reading and practice, if CamFE (Cameroon Francophone English) speakers have not been able to change their way of speaking and writing English, their lexico-grammatical features can thus be considered stable. CamFE, which is the variety of English spoken by French-speaking Cameroonians (Safotso 2012 & 2015b, Safotso 2022; Atechi 2018) abounds in peculiar lexical, syntactical, phonological and grammatical features which differentiate it from other New Englishes. Safotso (2022) points out that it can now be heard in public speeches and on audio-visual media on a daily basis. From the interlanguage framework, this study looks at some lexical and grammatical aspects of this non-native English to draw attention to their consistency. The focus is, among others, on some vocabulary items, countable/ uncountable nouns, adjectives, time expressions, prepositions, gender, plurals, determiners and idiomatic expressions. Before reviewing some literature, a glimpse at the Cameroonian linguistic landscape is necessary to set the context of the study.

2. A glimpse at the Cameroonian linguistic landscape

The Cameroonian linguistic landscape is very complex. Although their exact number is not known, there are about 250 home languages spoken in Cameroon. Mba (2009:551) signals 239 languages, CETRA (2012), over 600, whereas Ethnologue (2020) indicates 284 local languages used in the country. Besides this high number of native languages, French and English are used as official languages, and Pidgin English as a lingua franca. Another important language which has been in use by the youth of urban centres since 1970s is Camfranglais, which is a mixture of local languages, English, French and Pidgin English (Lobe Ewane 1989; Ntsobe 2008). CamE (Cameroon English) is spoken in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon as a legacy of the British colonisation. It is used by the national radio and television, some major private newspapers and radio/TV channels. In the English-speaking regions of the South/North West, it serves as the medium of instruction. CamFE (Cameroon Francophone English) has emerged as a result of the rush for English by French-speaking Cameroonians in the last two decades or so. That variety of English is presently spoken by an important number of English teachers and heard on major radio/TV stations of the country. Some

Cameroonians who speak it are also fluent not only in their home languages and French, but in German, Spanish, Chinese or Italian, which are taught in the Francophone sub-system of Education as foreign languages. So, when a CamFE speaker writes or speaks English in a certain way, at times it is very hard to identify the source of the problem.

3. Literature review

From the point of view of Standard English, any deviation from the norm is considered an error or a mistake. But in many non-native Englishes, those features are so consistent that many studies question whether they should not rather be codified. Kachru (1983) points out that a **deviation** (from the viewpoint of Standard English) is a regular feature of non-native English used by all, or at least by the majority of its speakers. Given that the future of English lies rather in the Outer and Expanding Circles (Gradol 2000), the issue of errors and mistakes in New Englishes is a topic of great debate (Hamid, Zhu & Baldauljr 2014; Camps & Salisbury 2008; Schneider 2003). Hamid, Zhu & Baldauljr, (2014: 89) argue that the growing recognition of World Englishes has made it imperative to draw a line between errors and innovations.

In the literature, there is ample research on the various features of non-native Englishes. Many of them focus on their phonology, either to show how they deviate from RP or to claim their autonomy. Gargesh (2004: 998-999) reports that the segments /θ, ð, s, z / do not exist in Indian English, and that [ʃem] (*same*) for [seim], [fri:dʒ] (*freeze*) for [fri:z], [praɪdʒ] (*prize*) for [praɪz], [jɪl] (*hill*) for [hɪl], [pa:və] (*power*) for [pauə] are consistent features of that variety of English. Some studies concentrate on their intelligibility. Bansal (1969) studied the intelligibility of Indian English (IndE) to show how it is incomprehensible to native speakers. Similar studies were conducted by Tiffen (1974) on Nigerian English (NigE), Benrabah (1987) on Algerian English, and Atechi (2006) on Cameroon English. Safotso (2015a) measured the mutual intelligibility of two non-native Englishes, namely Indian English and Cameroon English. The findings showed that the two varieties of English were hardly mutually intelligible by 50 per cent.

Citing Jowitt (1991), Ajewole-Orimogunge & Oluremi (2013:266) list the following items as belonging to Nigerian English lexis: *akara*, a Yoruba word for fried cake made of bean flour; *buka*, from Hausa, meaning cheap eating place; *ogbono*, an Igbo word for soup. Mesthrie & Bhatt (2012) reviewed a number of structural features of New Englishes focussing on morphology and phrasal syntax. For example, citing Platt, Weber & Ho (1984:118), they reported the following cases of omission "*Is very nice food*" for *It is a very nice food*; "*But I move into the flat, is Ok*" for *When I move into the flat, it is OK* respectively as features of Ugandan and Phillipines Englishes. Ojetunde (2013) investigated a number of lexical and grammatical innovations and coinages by Nigerian learners of English and considered them as errors. Oluremi (2013) saw them as regular features of Nigerian English. For example, according to Oluremi (2013:269) *Jane has put to birth* (Jane has given birth to a child); *she has four issues* (she has four children) are normal features of Nigerian English. Like the speakers of other non-native Englishes,

French-speaking Cameroonian speakers/learners of English generally exhibit some common features in their written and spoken productions. This is more observable at the level of pronunciation and has somewhat been codified (Safotso, 2018, 2015b & 2012; Simo Bobda 2013; Atechi 2015; Kouega 2017 & 2008). At grammatical and lexical levels, some studies continue to call those characteristics errors or deviations from Standard British English (Sokeng 2014). They are yet fossilised items (Selinker 1972) and can already be added to the features of CamFE (Safotso 2018, 2015b & 2012).

4. Methodology

The data analysed come from various sources: (1) university students' essays (N=600) scrutinised for five years, i.e. covering several batches of students from year one to five; (2) Master's dissertations and PhD theses drafts (N=25). This was done during the supervision of students' works. (3) Another rich source of data collection was students' presentations and debates on varied topics. (4) The last set of data was gathered from some national radio/TV debates. The various items were jotted down, codified, and their recurrence checked. The analysis is done following this structure: mass and invariable nouns, adjectives, semantic extension of certain words, plural of irregular nouns, determiners, gender, prepositions, time expressions, indefinite pronouns, personal and possessive pronouns, omission and overgeneralization, comparison, age, thirst, weight, height, concord, questions, spelling and capitalization.

5. Results

Cameroon francophone English speakers have a particular way of using certain words. Section 5.1 below analyses their use of mass nouns.

5. 1 Use of mass and invariable nouns

CamFE users do not differentiate between certain mass and count nouns. Table 1 below lists a number of words that are mass nouns in Standard British English but pluralized in CamFE.

Table 1: Use of mass nouns by CamFE speakers

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
We have got two informations .	We have got <i>two pieces of information</i> .
They gave her three advices .	They gave her <i>three pieces of advice</i> .
The wind caused a lot of damages .	The wind caused <i>a lot of damage</i> .
I have two news for you.	I have <i>two pieces of news</i> for you.
He has many knowledges in that domain.	He has <i>a lot of knowledge</i> in the domain.
They did two researches in the village.	They <i>carried out two pieces of research</i> in the village.
Her head has lots of hairs .	Her head has <i>lot of hair</i> .
In our house there are many furnitures .	In our house there are <i>many pieces of furniture</i> .
Yesterday I lost my luggages at the park.	Yesterday I lost my <i>luggage</i> at the park.
Yesterday we had two weathers .	Yesterday we had <i>two types of weather</i> .
In our village there are many sheeps .	In our village there are <i>many sheep</i> .

There were many aircrafts .	There were <i>many aircraft</i> .
In our farm there are many fruits .	In our farm there are <i>many fruit</i> .
We caught many fishes .	We caught <i>many fish</i> .

The table shows that many mass nouns are pluralized by CamFE speakers. This is certainly due to the fact that some of those words are found in French with similar or slightly different spelling, and the French language admits their plural forms, e.g. *les nouvelles* (news), *les informations* (information), *les conseils* (advice), *des dommages* (damage), *des connaissances* (knowledge), *des recherches* (research), *des cheveux* (hair), *les fournitures* (furniture), *les baggages* (luggage), *les climats* (weather). These are cases of negative transfer (Odlin 2000; Lightbown & Spada 2010). Rignbom (1986 in Lightbown & Spada 2010:94) remarks that phenomenon in the case of Swedish-Finnish-speaking learners of English in the following terms: “*The fact that Swedish and English are closely related languages that actually do share many characteristics seems to have led learners to take a chance that a word or sentence structure that worked in Swedish would have an English equivalent*”. CamFE speakers also pluralize invariable nouns such as sheep, aircraft, fruit and fish, e.g. many **sheeps**, many **aircrafts**, many **fruits**, many **fishes** for many *sheep*, many *aircraft*, many *fruit*, many *fish*. It should be noted that this feature is also characteristic of CamE (Cameroon English) and other non-native Englishes. *Fish* and *fruit* take the plural marker only when talking of particular species of fish or fruit, as in ‘*artic fishes are more delicious; tropical fruits are juicy*’. Section 5.2. discusses the use of adjectives.

5.2 Use of adjectives

In English, adjectives are generally used as pre-modifiers. Like adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, etc, they do not take the plural form. In most cases, CamFE users pluralize adjectives or use them as post-modifiers, as illustrated in Table 2, which follows.

Table 2: Use of adjectives by CamFE speakers

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
Students excellents go far.	<i>Excellent</i> students go far.
Students disobedients don't follow teachers.	<i>Disobedient</i> students don't follow teachers.
The reds books on the table are for Mary.	The red books on the table are for Mary.
Negatives effects of storm	<i>Negative</i> effects of storm
There are multiples ways to do it.	There are <i>multiple</i> ways to do it.

It can be remarked that the productions above have two major problems. Adjectives are pluralized and used as post-modifiers. These difficulties may be attributed to the French. In that language, all adjectives take the plural markers when they modify a plural noun, e.g. *élèves sales* (dirty students). Safotso (2020: 1214) noted this feature of CamFE, e.g. “*différents people, three beautifuls girls, ten longs legs*”. Using adjectives as post-modifiers, e.g. *students excellents*, *students disobedients*, is one of the regular features of CamFE, which can also be attributed to French. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of French adjectives occur after the noun that they qualify. Just a few of them

are used at the same time as pre- and post-modifiers, *des honnêtes gens* or *des gens honnêtes*; *de sérieux problèmes* or *de problèmes sérieux*. Although the English Language also allows post-modification, it is used in a different way. Post-modifiers in English are either prepositional phrases, non-finite clauses, or finite clauses, e.g. a young man **with a beard**; a small boy **playing with his toy**; a tall man **who was combing his beard**. Simple adjectives very rarely occur as post-modifiers in English, e.g. Court **Martial**, Attorney **General**, Governor **General**, Secretary **General**. Some simple English words have a totally different meaning in CamFE as discussed in Section 5.3. below.

5.3 Semantic extension of certain English words

In CamFE, the meaning of certain English words is extended, and they refer to totally different things, as illustrated by Table 3, which follows.

Table 3: Semantic extension of certain English words and French loans in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
Our class is painted in yellow.	Our <i>classroom</i> is painted in yellow.
He is at the house .	He is <i>at home</i> .
Which money do they use in France?	Which <i>currency</i> do they use in France?
I went to the library to buy my book.	I went to the <i>bookshop</i> to buy my book.
He is a big man.	He is a <i>great / important</i> person.
At the market we saw a big woman.	A the market we saw a <i>huge / fat</i> woman.
They come from a big family; they are 18.	They come from a <i>large</i> family; they are 18.
What's your matricule number?	What is your <i>registration</i> number?
Their exposé on Commonwealth was good.	Their <i>presentation</i> on Commonwealth was interesting.
The teacher gave me a very bad note .	The teacher gave me a very bad <i>mark</i> .
<i>Tam-Tam Weekend</i> was a good emission .	<i>Tam-Tam Weekend</i> was a good <i>program</i> .

As with the use of adjectives, many of the problems here are caused by the subjects' French background. The French word **classe** which is close to *class* in that language, means at the same time classroom and class, e.g. *La classe a lieu dans cette classe* (the class is taking place in this classroom). Library is also close to the French word **librairie** (bookshop). The use of money for currency is due to the Cameroon French, as in that variety of French, there is no difference between **monnaie** (money) and **dévises** (currency). They are all called **argent** (money). **Matricule**, **note**, and **exposé** (as used here) are pure French loans into CamFE. Exposé in English has a totally different meaning: it is the act or an instance of bringing a scandal or crime, etc., to public notice. The use of **big** for *great*, *important*, *huge*, *fat* and *large* can at the same time be attributed to Cameroon French and CamE. In those languages, *big* is used in the way produced by the subjects in the table. Ajewole-Orimogunge & Oluremi (2013:266) also noted this phenomenon of semantic shift in Nigerian English, e.g. *bush meat* (meat of wild animal); *long leg* (personal connection with an influential person to obtain favour); *light* (electricity). The following section treats of the plurals of irregular nouns.

5.4 Use of plural of irregular nouns in CamFE

CamE speakers have their own way of using the plural of English irregular nouns. The following table provides some examples.

Table 4: Use of plurals of irregular nouns in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
There are many mosquitos in our house.	There are many <i>mosquitoes</i> in our house.
Please, give me two potatos .	Please, give me two <i>potatoes</i> .
Two calabashs of palm wine	Two <i>calabashes</i> of palm wine
He had four knifs .	He had four <i>knives</i> .
Ten womans / womens came.	Ten <i>women</i> came.
The childrens are playing.	The <i>children</i> are paying.
In the village there are many witchs .	In the village there are many <i>witches</i> .

From the table above, it comes out that CamFE users do not differentiate irregular nouns from regular ones, e.g. **calabashs**; **knifs**; **womans**; **potatos**. As a matter of fact, unlike English which has a very high number of irregular nouns, the only irregular nouns in French are those that end in **-eu** and whose plural is **-eux**; and those that end in **-ou** and whose plural is **-oux**, with a few exceptions, e.g. **un feu, des feux** (a fire, fires); **un bijou, des bijoux** (a jewel, jewels). Apart from these two categories, the plural of all the remaining French nouns ends in **-s**. So, when CamFE users who are familiar with the French grammar rule on plural nouns come to English plurals, they find them very confusing. Determiners treated in 5.5. below is another problematic area.

5.5 Use of determiners

The use of determiners is quite problematic in CamFE. Its speakers either use the definite article with generic nouns, quantifiers or omit them as illustrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Use of determiners in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
The oranges are sweet.	<i>Oranges</i> are sweet.
The dogs are the animals .	<i>Dogs</i> are <i>animals</i> .
Students study with the books .	Students learn with <i>books</i> .
The both girls are beautiful.	<i>Both</i> girls are beautiful.
We do the classes at IRAD	We have <i>classes</i> at IRAD.
Certain people don't like it.	<i>Certain</i> people don't like it.
They are in others classes.	They are in <i>other</i> classes.
There is few water in the bottle.	There is <i>little</i> water in the bottle.
I am geography student.	I am <i>a geography</i> student.
We go to market every Sunday.	We go <i>to the market</i> every Sunday.
She refused to go to cinema .	She refused to go <i>to the cinema</i> .

The table shows that CamFE speakers use the definite article *the* with generic nouns as well as with some quantifiers, e.g. **the oranges are sweet**, **the both girls are beautiful** for *oranges are sweet*, *both girls are beautiful*. This problem can be attributed to French

grammar in which the definite articles **le, la, les** are used for generic and specific nouns. For example, **le sac rouge est joli ; le sac rouge de Marie est joli ; les sacs rouges sont jolis ; les sacs rouges des enfants sont jolis** are all correct in French. Another particular use of determiners in CamFE is the pluralization of some indefinite pronouns, e.g. **certain people; others classes** for *certain people and other classes*. This may also result from French where indefinite pronouns take the plural form, e.g. **certaines personnes** (certain people), **autres classes** (other classes). The omission and confusion of determiners is also quite frequent in CamFE as in **go to market / cinema** for *go to the market / the cinema*; **few water** for *little water*. The reason for the omission of the determiner is hard to find and may be due to the subjects' home languages. Indeed, many Cameroonian languages have no determiners. In cases where there are some, they operate differently from the English and French ones. This feature is not particular to CamFE . It has also been found in some non-native Englishes. Mesthries & Bhatt (2012: 50), citing Chang (1987:231), give the following examples from Chinese English 'Let's make fire; I can play piano' for 'Let's make the fire; I can play the piano'. They explain that it is due to the inexistence of articles in Chinese. The confusion of *few and little* observed in **few water** for *little water* is also a problem in CamE and has no plausible reason. Indeed, many non-native speakers of English in general find it very difficult to use quantifier determiners. Crystal (2005:159) clarifies that *much, little* and *a little* refer to uncountable nouns, and *each, both, one, either, neither, many, few* and *a few* refer to count nouns. The next section looks at the use of gender.

5.6 Use of gender in CamFE

CamFE speakers generally confuse English gender, as shown in the following table.

Table 6: Use of gender in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
Mary is angry with his father.	Mary is angry with <i>her</i> father.
Jane has a car; it's his car.	Jane has a car; it's <i>her</i> car.
Mary failed his exam.	Mary failed <i>her</i> exam.
Susan is sick; his husband is very poor.	Susan is sick; <i>her</i> husband is very poor.
This is my brother; her wife is young.	This is my brother; <i>his</i> wife is young.
When Sarah comes back I will kiss him .	When Sarah comes back, I will kiss <i>her</i> .
Since she is angry, give him some bread.	Since she is angry, give <i>her</i> some bread.
John is crying because her mother died.	John is crying because <i>his</i> mother died.

CamFE speakers find it extremely difficult to use English gender. The problem is induced by French grammatical gender. Indeed, English does not make use of grammatical gender, which is a key chapter of French grammar. With the exception of a few French words which are neutral, i.e. at the same time feminine and masculine (e.g. *après-midi, journaliste*), all French words are grouped into two categories: **masculine** and **feminine**. So, in that language, the determiner agrees with the grammatical gender of the noun, no matter the natural sex of the owner. For instance, **la case** (the house), **sa case** (his/her house), **le mur** (the wall), **son mur** (his/her wall) remain unchanged

whether their owner is a male or a female. Thus, when CamFE speakers and French-speaking people in general have to use English gender, which rather agrees with the male and female sexes, they are quite confused, as they rather try to see if the noun is masculine or feminine. Safotso (2020: 1215) mentioned this problem, e.g. 'This is my aunt, and this is **his** husband; this is my nephew, and this is **her** mother' for '*this is my aunt, and this is her husband; this is my nephew, and this is his mother*'. This feature is not particular to CamFE. It is also found in some non-native Englishes. Platt, Weber and Ho (1984: 61-2 in Mesthrie & Bhatt 2012: 55) report that, where the background languages do not make a distinction between *he*, *she* and *it*, those pronouns are often used indiscriminately. They offer the following examples from East African and Malaysian Englishes: "My husband, who was in England, *she* was by then my fiancé; My mother, *he* lives in Kampong". 5.7. which follows looks at the use of prepositions.

5.7 Use of prepositions

To most non-native users of English, prepositions are quite difficult. They usually confuse or omit them. Table 7 below summarises some examples in CamFE.

Table 7: Use of prepositions in CamFE

Examples in CamFE	Standard British English version
They are going at school.	They are going <i>to</i> school.
Are you <i>in</i> school?	Are you <i>at</i> school?
They are still in church.	They are still <i>at</i> church.
We congratulate you for your success.	We congratulate you <i>on</i> your success.
Kamga has just arrived at Yaounde.	Kamga has just arrived <i>in</i> Yaounde.
All the students looked the blackboard.	All the students looked <i>at</i> the blackboard.
He looked my nose and said he liked it.	He looked <i>at</i> my nose and said he liked it.
You must listen the radio every day for good news.	You must listen <i>to</i> the radio every day for good news.
Ask him money.	Ask him <i>for</i> some money.
The working conditions <i>in</i> campus are bad.	The working conditions <i>on</i> campus are bad.
She went there for ask money.	She went there <i>to</i> ask <i>for</i> some money.
Umaru is good in Mathematics/English.	Umaru is good <i>at</i> Mathematics/English.
Many people die from malaria in Cameroon.	Many people die <i>of</i> malaria in Cameroon.
The government is disappointed by the opposition's behaviour.	The government is disappointed <i>of</i> the opposition's behaviour.
Our teacher divided the class by two.	Our teacher divided the class <i>into</i> two.
My boyfriend is very kind with me.	My boyfriend is very kind <i>to</i> me.
What is the reason of your absence?	What is the reason <i>for</i> your absence?
Mary took part at his birthday party.	Mary took part <i>in</i> his birthday party.
His illness resulted to death.	His illness resulted <i>in</i> death.
Dongo has succeeded at his exam.	Dongo has succeeded <i>in</i> his exam.
Please, call the girl sitting on that desk.	Please, call the girl sitting <i>at</i> that desk.
When I see a snake I tremble of fear.	When I see a snake I tremble <i>with</i> fear.
He will fill the form with pen/ pencil.	He will fill in the form <i>in</i> pen/pencil.
My sister is married with a rich man.	My sister is married <i>to</i> a rich man.
At the end they were happy.	<i>In</i> the end they were happy.
The girl with the red dress is my sister.	The girl <i>in</i> the red dress is my sister.

According to me canteen should be free.	<i>To me/in my opinion</i> canteen should be free.
This was done in order for catch him.	This was done in order <i>to</i> catch him.

The examples of preposition use listed above are just a few among many other uses by CamFE speakers. The vast majority of problems here can be ascribed to French, as in many cases the users try to translate the preposition French equivalent, e.g. **mourir de paludisme** (die of malaria), **gentil avec moi** (kind to me), **réussir à son examen** (succeed in his exam), giving the faulty **die from malaria***, **kind with me***, **succeed at his exam***. As to omission, it may be caused at the same time by French and the informants' home languages. Many Cameroonian mother tongues have no prepositions. Sokeng (2014: 1782) reported some examples of problematic use of prepositions by CamFE speakers. They included 'I prefer to go **for** the village, the chicken was **in** the roof, **in** the beginning of 2014, I am afraid **by** long distance' for I prefer to go *to* the village, the chicken was *on* the roof, *at* the beginning of 2014, I am afraid *of* long distance. Safotso (2020: 1214) remarked that the confusion and restructuring of some of them were, at the same time, features of CamFE and CamE. He pointed out that both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians say 'in church/school/the market; in the plane/the train/the ship' for **at** church/school/the market and **on** the plane/the train/the ship. He equally noted that they say '**out of** the bus/the plane/the ship/the train', train, which to them seems more logical than *off the bus/the plane/the ship/the train*. The next section explores the use of time expressions.

5.8 Use of time expressions: since, for, during, ago

The expression of time is a domain in which CamFE speakers abound in innovations. Some of those expressions are summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Use of time expressions: since, for, during, ago

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
I came here since 10 years ago.	I came here 10 years <i>ago</i> .
Since two weeks he was doing it.	He has been doing it <i>for</i> two weeks.
He knows him since 2015.	He has known him <i>since</i> 2015.
We stayed at school during five hours.	We stayed at school <i>for</i> five hours.
They did the exercise during 10 minutes.	They did the exercise <i>for</i> 10 minutes.
During two weeks we were hungry.	We were hungry <i>for</i> two weeks.
20 years ago my father died.	My father died 20 years <i>ago</i> .
He can live two days without food.	He can live <i>for</i> two days without food.
She slept in that house two days.	She slept in that hour <i>for</i> two days.
My mother will do it one year.	My mother will do it <i>for</i> one / a year.

As can be observed above, time expressions are used in a confused way in CamFE. For example, *for* is substituted for *during*, or omitted, e.g. **during two weeks, during 10 minutes** for '*for two weeks, for 10 minutes*'; '**he slept in that house four days, he can live two days without food** for '*he slept in that house for four days, he can live for two days without food*'. The confusion between *during* and *for* is caused by French, as in that language the time expression *for* means **pendant** or **durant**, which is close to *during*. The omission is induced at the same time by Cameroonian home languages and Cameroon

French, where **durant/pendant** are generally omitted. The poor use of *since* may also be caused by French as the use of its time expression **depuis** (since) does not require the use of a perfect tense, e.g. **je le connais depuis 10 ans; elle le faisait depuis deux jours**. In these two examples, the use of the present tense and pluperfect is correct. As to the disorderly use of *ago*, there is no plausible explanation. The next section looks at the production of indefinite pronouns.

5.9 Use of indefinite pronouns

In Cameroonian home languages and French, there are indefinite pronouns, but they function differently from the English ones. That is why CamFE speakers use them in a confused way, as shown in the following table.

Table 9: Use of indefinite pronouns in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
Anybody is waiting for us.	<i>Someone/somebody</i> is waiting for us.
I am not talking to nobody .	I am not talking to <i>anybody</i> .
I didn't see nobody .	I didn't see <i>anybody</i> .
Does somebody have a good time?	Does <i>anybody</i> have the right time?
We don't want to see nobody here.	We don't want to see <i>anybody</i> here.
We don't want to buy nothing .	We don't want to buy <i>anything</i> .
If you are looking for students, much are there.	If you are looking for students, <i>many</i> are there.
You are going with who ?	With <i>whom</i> are you going?

From the table, it can be noted that in CamFE, indefinite pronouns are generally substituted for different ones, e.g. *someone/somebody* for **anybody**; *anybody* for **nobody**, and *anything* for **nothing**. This is a translation from French whose indefinite pronouns function in the same way as in some Cameroonian local languages. For example, **quelqu'un nous attend; je n'ai vu personne** would give the following literal translation, 'Anybody is waiting for us; I didn't see **nobody**' as the subjects did. So here, it is a case of double negative transfer. Section 5.10. examines the personal and possessive pronouns.

5.10 Use of personal and possessive pronouns

Although CamFE speakers use English personal and possessive pronouns fairly well, they are confused with some of them, as shown in the following table.

Table 10: Use of personal and possessive pronouns in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
Everyone should buy his book.	Everyone should buy <i>their</i> book.
Nobody should wear his cap in class.	Nobody should wear <i>their</i> cap in class.
This is our dog; he eats grass.	This is our dog; <i>it</i> eats grass.
This is my mango tree; he produces every year.	This is my mango tree; <i>it</i> produces every year.
My friend has two books; these are mines .	My friend has two books; these are <i>mine</i> .

The problems observed here, like many others studied so far, are induced by French. Indeed, French possessive adjectives do not differentiate between humans and objects/animals. The only distinction is between feminine and masculine nouns, e.g. *mon père a sa chemise*; *mon chat a sa cage* (my father has his shirt; my cat has its cage). Although **père** and **chat**, who are the owners of **chemise** and **cage** are masculine nouns, the possessive adjective **sa** agrees only with the grammatical gender of **chemise** and **cage**, which are feminine nouns. Unlike English, in which indefinite personal pronouns are neutral, in French, all the indefinite pronouns are masculine. It is why the subjects agree with the possessive adjective of the object owned with it, e.g. ‘**everyone** should buy **his** book’ for *everyone should buy their book*. Although this is a case of sex bias on which some grammarians do not agree (see Crystal 2005:164-65), the best way is to say *their* rather than *his* or *his/her*. French also accounts for the plural marker morpheme -s in mine, e.g. ‘these are **mines**’. All French possessive pronouns have a singular and plural form, e.g. **le mien, la mienne; les miens, les miennes**. Section 5.11. The following looks at omission and overgeneralization.

5.11 Omission and overgeneralization

CamFE speakers omit some prepositions in their production, and over generalise some English grammatical rules, as exemplified below.

Table 11: Omission and overgeneralization in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
He was hunting x the afternoon.	He was hunting <i>in</i> the afternoon.
He can live x two days without food.	He can live <i>for</i> two days without food.
I am x student of geography.	I am <i>a</i> geography student.
He is x citizen of Dschang.	He is <i>a</i> citizen of Dschang.
My sister is x catholic.	My sister is <i>a</i> catholic.
Sikuru is x Nigerian.	Sikuru is <i>a</i> Nigerian.
That shirt costed 500 francs.	That shirt <i>cost</i> 500 francs.
The hunter shooted three monkeys.	The hunter <i>shot</i> three monkeys.
He pushs it well.	He <i>pushes</i> it well.
My mother always satisfys my needs.	My mother always <i>satisfies</i> my needs.
We are in x dry season.	We are in <i>the</i> dry season.
It was in x rainy season.	It was in <i>the</i> rainy season.
In sea x there are many boats.	<i>Ni</i> the sea there are many boats.

Note: X in CamFE examples signals where there is an omission.

The omission of prepositions and articles in the examples above is generally caused by Cameroon French and home languages. A translation of the following sentences in standard French would require a preposition: ‘he was hunting in the afternoon’ in standard French is *il chassait dans l’après-midi*. But the translation of ‘it was in the rainy season’ requires no article in standard French, e.g. **c’était en saison de pluies**. In many Cameroonian home languages and Cameroon French constructions, there are no prepositions and articles where they are obligatory in Standard British English. It should be noted that this feature is also found in CamE and other non-native Englishes.

Citing Chang (1987:231), Mesthries & Bhatt (2012:50) give the following examples of article omission by Chinese EFL learners “Let’s make fire; I can play piano” for *Let’s make the fire; I can play the piano*. This is due to the fact that the Chinese language has no articles at all. They also cite a number of examples of preposition omission from Penfied-Jasper (1980:145): “He lives that second house; I was California” for *He lives in that second house, I was in California* (p.73). The overgeneralization of the **-ed** morpheme of the past tense and the **-s** marker of the third person singular can be attributed to the user's interlanguage. CamFE speakers make comparisons in a particular way, as discussed in the section below.

5.12 Comparatives

Although comparison functions in almost the same way in English and French, CamFE users find it quite complicated as illustrated in the following table.

Table 12: Comparison in CamFE

CamFE Examples	Standard British English version
He looks as a monkey.	He looks <i>like</i> a monkey
The most fat boy of the class is Thomas.	Thomas is the <i>fattest</i> boy of the class.
The most tall of the two girls is Mary.	The <i>taller</i> of the two girls is Mary.
John is more big than Umaru.	John is <i>bigger</i> than Umaru.
Esther is the most young in his family.	Esther is the <i>youngest</i> in her family.
Their works are worst than my own.	Their works are <i>worse</i> than my own.
This is most better than what he did.	This is <i>much better</i> than what he did.

The table shows that the subjects generally have problems with short adjectives, e.g. the **most fat/tall/big/young** for *fatter, taller, bigger and younger*. This is due to the fact that most Cameroonian languages and French do not distinguish between long and short adjectives. In French, to express comparison of superiority, they simply precede all adjectives by plus, e.g. **plus court; plus long; plus important** (shorter, longer, more important). With long adjectives, CamFE speakers have less difficulty. The expressions of age, thirst, weight and height are discussed in 5.13. They are also quite problematic for them.

5.13 Expression of age, thirst, weight and height

CamFE speakers find it extremely difficult to express age, thirst, weight, hunger and height in English. They generally resort to translation from French and their home languages, as shown in the following table.

Table 15: Expression of age, thirst, weight, hunger and height in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
<i>What age have you?</i>	<i>How old are you?</i>
I have thirsty.	<i>I am</i> thirsty.
I have hungry.	<i>I am</i> hungry.
She has 15 years old.	<i>She is</i> 15 years old.
John has 1.67 m.	<i>John is</i> 1.67 m.

Mary has 86 kilograms.	Mary is 56 Kilograms.
Donfack weighs 90 Kilograms.	Donfack is 90 kilograms.

All the examples above are translations of the French language. For instance, **I have thirsty; I have hungry; Mary has 86 kilograms** are respectively translated into French as *j'ai soif; j'ai faim; Mary a 86 kilogrammes*, which are all correct French. Concord treated below is another difficult area to CamFE users.

5.14 Concord

Concord is generally easy in English, but CamFE speakers find some of its aspects quite difficult and confusing. Table 14 below provides some examples.

Table 14: Concord in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
The United States of America are a great country.	The United States of America <i>is</i> a great country.
The United Nations are a bad organisation.	The United Nations <i>is</i> a bad organisation.
Five kilometres are a long distance.	Five kilometres <i>is</i> a long distance.
The students likes holydays.	Students <i>like</i> holydays.
Mary love his husband.	Mary <i>loves</i> her husband.
My parents lives in the village.	My parents <i>live</i> in the village.
A large number of people are expected.	A large number of people <i>is</i> expected.

Concord is one of the most difficult aspects of French grammar. CamFE speakers who are used to it do not perhaps believe it is so easy in English. It is maybe why they complicate it. Indeed, in English conjugation, the verb varies only once in time (in the third person singular), or not at all (in past tenses). The subjects who are thus familiar with a language where the verb varies in all the persons and tenses in a very complicated way try to apply that rule to English, e.g. **my parents lives in the village** for *my parents live in the village*. They certainly do not understand why the subject *parents*, which is a plural noun, can agree with *live*, which is an infinitive verb. The problem with **The United States of America** and **The United Nations** is because in French they are used as plural nouns, e.g. *Les Etats Unis sont...*, *Les Nations Unies sont...* The same reason accounts for *five kilometres are...* and *a large number of people are...* They function in French as plural noun phrases. CamFE speakers also have their way of asking questions in English, as examined in 5.15.

5.15 Questions in CamFE

As in many other areas of English, CamFE speakers have a particular way of asking questions, as shown in the following table.

Table 15: Questions in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
You are saying it to who ?	<i>To whom</i> are you saying it / that?
He is who ?	<i>Who</i> is he?
Your mother is coming when ?	<i>When</i> is your mother coming?

At the market you will buy what ?	<i>What</i> will you buy at the market?
They will go tomorrow?	<i>Will they</i> go tomorrow?
It's what ?	<i>What</i> is it?
You want what of the three books?	<i>Which</i> of the three books do you want?
You eat rice?	<i>Do</i> you eat rice?
They like it?	<i>Do</i> they like it?

In Cameroon French and Cameroon English, users generally translate from their native languages. In Cameroon French, it is quite correct to say '**tu parles à qui?** (you speak to who?); **tu veux quoi?** (you want what ?)' for *à qui parles-tu?* (to whom are you speaking?; *que veux-tu?* (what do you want?). Examples such as **you go where? you do what? you eat what? she wants what? you are where?** etc. for *where are you going? what are you doing? what do you eat? what does she want? where are you? etc.* are also common in CamE, and are translations from home languages. So, the problem here generally lies in Cameroonian home languages in which question pronouns occur at the end of the question. In some instances, there is no question pronoun at all, as in '**they eat rice?**' for *'do they eat rice? 'they like it? 'do they like it?*, which can also be attributed to Cameroonian home languages. Section 5.16. This section investigates how CamFE users spell and capitalise certain words in English.

5.16 Spelling and capitalisation in CamFE

CamFE speakers find it extremely difficult to use capitalisation and spell certain words in English. Some examples are provided in Table 16, which follows.

Table 16: Spelling and capitalisation in CamFE

CamFE examples	Standard British English version
We had an english/ a french/ german lesson yesterday.	We had an <i>English/ a French/ German</i> lesson yesterday.
american/french/ chinese films are good.	<i>American/French/Chinese</i> films are good.
december/january/february/ is a cold month.	<i>December/January/February</i> is a cold Month.
On monday/friday/sunday we dance.	On <i>Monday/Friday/Sunday</i> we dance.
I saw a togolese/ senegalese/spanish woman here last week.	I saw a <i>Togolese/Senegalese/Spanish</i> woman here last week.
Cameroon was colonised by the germans .	Cameroon was colonised by the <i>Germans</i> .
River sanaga is the longest river in Cameroon.	<i>Sanaga</i> River is the longest river in Cameroon.
Yesterday we had a litterature lesson.	Yesterday we had a <i>literature</i> class.
The industries are not devellopped in africa	Industries are not <i>developed</i> in <i>Africa</i> .

As can be remarked in the table, spelling and capitalisation in English are quite complicated for CamFE users. As a matter of fact, English and French do not adopt the same spelling and capitalization system. Some common words in English and French are spelt differently in the two languages. For example, *litterature*, *consomme*, *personne*, *développeur* have double consonants in French, whereas in

English they are spelt with one consonant (literature, consonant, consume, person, develop). In dates, names of days and months, the first letters are not capitalised in French, whereas they are in English. Similarly, in adjectives of nationality as well as names of languages, the initial letters are capitalised in English, whereas they are not in French. Tenjoh-Okwen (1974: 59) noted some of these problems in the following examples: *"In Cameroon you have two languages; the french and the english language; east Cameroon was colonised by the french."* So, spelling and capitalisation is an area of the English language where CamFE speakers have serious interferential problems from French.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined some of the lexical and grammatical features of Cameroon Francophone English. Some of them are quite peculiar. Like its phonological features, they are in all respects stable and different from those of other non-native Englishes and better confirm CamFE as a non-native variety of English in its own right. Like the features of any dynamic language, many other aspects of its lexico-grammatical features remain to be disclosed. Given the large number of CamFE speakers in Cameroon, among whom a high proportion of English language teachers, students and the general public at large, that language will certainly continue to generate more particular features.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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